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C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 001333

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SUBJECT: THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY SPEAKER MIRZA

REF: ISLAMABAD 1220

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Peter Bodde, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (C) Summary. In a March 25 meeting, the Deputy
Secretary congratulated Fahimida Mirza on becoming Pakistan's

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first female National Assembly Speaker and welcomed her
proposed visit to Washington. Mirza described her plans to
strengthen the institution of parliament. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Deputy Secretary Negroponte, accompanied by SCA
Assistant Secretary Boucher and Polcouns met March 25 with
newly elected National Assembly Speaker Fahmida Mirza. Also
attending were National Assembly Director General Feroz Khan
and Secretary Karamat Hussain Niazi and Pakistan People's
Party (PPP) member Fara Ispahani.

¶3. (C) The Deputy Secretary congratulated Mirza on being
elected as Pakistan's first female National Assembly Speaker.
Mirza said that she hoped to visit Washington soon; the
Deputy Secretary welcomed the visit and urged her to
coordinate so that she would have an opportunity to meet with
House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Mirza
explained that although she was a PPP representative, the
Speaker's job required her to be a non-partisan leader. Her
goals were to uphold Benazir Bhutto's legacy as a role model
to women and to strengthen parliament as an institution.
Mirza hoped to increase member attendance and participation
in the committee system, would demand that ministers appear
for question hour, and sought to increase the parliament's
oversight role over defense and other government budgets.
She welcomed additional USAID assistance in strengthening the
National Assembly.

¶4. (C) Asked about her assessment of where U.S. aid was
needed most, Mirza listed health, education, AIDS, family
planning and energy. She agreed with the Deputy Secretary's
concern that during the past eight years, not a single
megawatt of power had been added to Pakistan's energy grid.
On education, she noted that the greatest need was for
teacher training, especially for girls' schools. On health,
Mirza (a medical doctor) suggested support for increased
research into water-borne illnesses and treatment of
tuberculosis.

¶5. (C) On the need to fight extremism, Mirza said it was
important to address the root causes and suggested that with

a popular mandate the new government would be in a better position to combat terrorism. The Deputy Secretary noted that we looked forward to cooperating with the PPP and the new government on the shared battle against terrorism. The U.S. was funding an integrated program of economic and security assistance for the Federally Administered Tribal Areas; this effort was part of Pakistan's own plan.

¶6. (SBU) Background: Mirza said she had been elected by a 75,000 majority for this, her third term in the National Assembly. She represents Badin, an area of southern Sindh which has reserves of both oil and natural gas. Her father had also been a politician who served as a minister in Benazir's first government; her brother who now runs a popular Sindhi newspaper served in Benazir's second government. She has several brothers and sisters (also all medical doctors) who live in the Lansing, Michigan area. (See reftel for additional bio information.)

¶7. (U) The Deputy Secretary has cleared this message.
BODDE